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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY FOR JANICE GARDNER

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SUBJECT: SAUDI MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR ON TERRORIST
FINANCING ISSUES

Classified By: DCM DAVID RUNDELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary -----

(S/NF) On February 24, 2009, Treasury Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis Howard Mendelsohn and GRPO officers met with Saudi Mabath Major General Khalid al-Humaydan (Abu Ali). The meeting centered on the common goals and challenges in combating terrorist financing and underscored the importance of continued cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia on this issue.

U.S.- Saudi CTF Cooperation -----

(S/NF) Mendelsohn acknowledged the important steps the Saudi Government has taken to combat terrorist financing and urged further progress, while of course giving priority to imminent security threats in the Kingdom. He stated that al-Qaida's weakened financial position was not unrelated to the Mabath's increased focus on addressing the funding of terrorism. He identified that a key challenge for the U.S. is uncovering the upstream sources of funding for terrorist organizations and asked for closer cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia on this issue. Abu Ali agreed that money is the blood of organizations such as al-Qaida, and lamented that the Mabath is not able to find the sources easily, and pledged further cooperation and attention.

(S/NF) Commenting on specific TF cases, Abu Ali raised Salih al-Rashudi, a wealthy Saudi who has been detained since June 2007 for providing financial support to al-Qaida. Abu Ali noted the difference between a donor such as al-Rashudi and a financial facilitator such as recently-detained Hashim Muhammad al-Hashimi, a.k.a. al-Tut. Unlike al-Rashudi, al-Tut was not wealthy and instead focused on bundling funds for al-Qaida. He described al-Tut as a middle man who likely collected funds for al-Qaida via intermediaries, not having direct access to donors themselves. Abu Ali raised Mabath detainee Fahad Ibrahim Abdullah al-Khurayf, a.k.a. Salim Ghanim, also considered a financial facilitator, rather than a donor, as he was not wealthy. He shared that at times Saudi Arabia "lucked out," such as a recent case where a Saudi was detained following the discovery of significant funds in his tires at the Saudi-Yemen border.

(S/NF) Abu Ali described a natural progression in the Mabath: with security gains achieved in the last couple years, Mabath turned to financial facilitators; with successes against facilitators, the Mabath is increasingly focused on the ultimate sources of terrorist funds.

(S/NF) Abu Ali stressed the importance of working cooperatively so as not to "poke our eyes with our own hands." He hopes to uncover more information that could be used as evidence in court to prosecute financial facilitators and donors, in order to take enforcement to the next level.

Lashkar-e-Taiba

(S/NF) On the subject of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET), Abu Ali described the organization as the Sunni equivalent of Hizballah, in terms of its capabilities and the danger it presents. The organization's training camps in Pakistan are so rigorous that several Saudis who enrolled failed to graduate. Abu Ali stated that LET was the only non-Saudi organization to use Swift Sword's training camp in the middle of Saudi Arabia. Abu Ali described detained LET fundraiser Mahmud Bahaziq as a serious threat. Once part of the al-Qaida organization in Saudi Arabia, Bahaziq was associated with a plot to contaminate Riyadh's water supply. Abu Ali asked that the USG look into an unnamed partner of Bahaziq who works at a medical school in Pakistan that is likely an LET front organization.

(S/NF) Abu Ali said that from a threat perspective, the Mabathith does not differentiate between organizations such as LET, Jemaah al-Islamiyya, and al Qaida - although they have different titles, they share the same goal.

The Sururiya Organization

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(S/NF) Mendelsohn raised Southeast Asian elements involved in terrorist support, including the Dar al-Hijra Foundation and Abdallah al-Sughayr, offering the Sururiya organization as common thread. In response, Abu Ali provided a detailed history of the Sururiya organization and its linkages to Saudi Arabia.

(S/NF) According to Abu Ali, Syrian-born Muhammad Surur bin Nayif Zain al-Abidin (Surur) - currently located in the United Kingdom - started the movement in the 1970's as a young teacher in Saudi Arabia by spreading his interpretation of Islam among students in religious institutions throughout the country. Abu Ali identified the Muslim Brotherhood as the "backbone" of Surur's ideology. His students at the time included future Saudi extremist clerics Safar al-Hawali and Salman alQwdah.

(S/NF) The Saudis expelled Surur, who took up residence in Kuwait. IQuwait, Surur contQed to communicate with his Saudi students and followers. Saudi authorities complained to the Kuwaitis about Surur's activities, with limited success. Underscoring the importance of Surur, Mabathith believes he was involved in the 1979 siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca (nfi). Abu Ali suggested that Surur also played a role in the 1982 massacre in Hama, Syria, stating "it's been said, but not proven." (Note: In 1982 Syrian forces attacked the Muslim Brotherhood stronghold of Hama, killing several thousand civilians and decimating the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. End Note.) Prior to the attack, Surur convinced Muslim Brotherhood members in the country to "give up" and return to Hama, at which point Syrian forces attacked (nfi).

(S/NF) After leaving Kuwait in the 1980s, Surur moved to the United Kingdom, where he established the Centre for Islamic Studies and began spreading his ideology globally. Surur's followers established the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) in the United Kingdom. Abu Ali described then CDLR leader Sa'ad al-Faqih as a member of Sururiya; his colleague Muhammad al-Masari was a Takfiri, not Sururi. Abu Ali described Surur as a "Godfather-like" figure who, for many years, vetted individuals who had traveled to

the United Kingdom to meet with al-Faqih or al-Masari. Surur published the Scandinavia-based radical magazine al-Qiblah, as well as the seemingly more moderate London-based As-Sunnah. The latter was used by Surur to criticize Saudi Arabia.

(S/NF) Commenting on Sururi follower Salman al-Awdah, Abu Ali stated that although al-Awdah criticized al-Qaida in the recent past and therefore put distance between him and his followers, al-Awdah has recently begun reconnecting with "his people" (nfi). Abu Ali stated that al-Qaida and the Sururiya movement share the same goal. Mendelsohn added that while they're working toward the same goal, Sururiya is more pragmatic than al-Qaida, which makes it dangerous in a different way. Assured by this recognition, Abu Ali responded "it seems you understand the threat we are facing," and emphasized "they don't like us and they don't like you either."

(S/NF) Building out the connection between radical Islamic ideologies shared by al-Qaida, Sururiya and the Muslim Brotherhood, Abu Ali continued, " Hamas, by the way, is another front for the Muslim Brotherhood. So is the Islamic Action Front in Jordan. They change labels, but it's the same medicine." Mendelsohn recognized that Mabath has taken measures to confront Hamas fundraisers in the Kingdom, but that significantly more could be done as Hamas continued to raise money in Saudi Arabia.

Charities

(S/NF) Responding to concerns about Saudi-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) financing terrorist networks, Abu Ali requested that the USG share information on particular individuals about whom the US was concerned. He said that while it is difficult for him to address NGOs at the organizational level, the Mabath is well equipped and motivated to confront individuals attached to NGOs where information suggests terrorist support activity.

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(S/NF) Mendelsohn agreed, caveating that although the USG will continue to look strategically at entities such as the International Islamic Relief Organization, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, and Hamas as organizations of concern, Treasury could tactically focus its information-sharing efforts with Mabath on the individuals within those organizations. Additionally, Abu Ali asked that the USG share information on the movement of charitable funds from Saudi Arabia abroad, given the Kingdom's ban on such financial movements.
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